

## Unified Command Plan Changes Transparent, but Important

In The News

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Just because the changes in the Unified Command Plan will be "transparent" to most service members doesn't mean they're not important.

The changes are revolutionary and will better enable the American military to perform its missions around the globe and at home, said Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in April. The president signed the plan April 30, and it will go into effect Oct. 1.

The biggest change is at home. The plan establishes the U.S. Northern Command. The command, to be stood up Oct. 1 also, will be responsible for military support to the defense of the United States. "It will be the homeland defense command for the United States," said Navy Capt. Doug McClain, a Joint Staff officer who worked on the UCP.

NORTHCOM's area of operations will include the United States, Canada, Mexico, parts of the Caribbean and the contiguous waters in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans up to 500 miles off the North American coastline.

The command will be a "one-stop-shopping" point for military support in case of an attack on the United States. McClain offered the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics experience as an example of the type of support Northern Command would provide. The lead federal agency at the Olympics was the Secret Service. DoD established Joint Task Force -- Olympics to provide military support. All calls for military support -- such as combat air patrols, equipment, logistics and security personnel -- channeled through the JTF.

Similarly, if the United States were attacked, all requests for military support would channel through Northern Command. President Bush has selected current U.S. Space Command commander Air Force Gen. Ralph E. Eberhart as the new commander in chief, or "Cinc." The general also commands the North American Aerospace Defense Command -- a joint venture with Canada to defend North America. In his new job, Eberhart will command the U.S. element to NORAD as well as Northern Command. He will not retain command of SPACECOM.

The responsibilities now held by Joint Task Force -- Civil Support and Joint Task Force -- Homeland Security will migrate to Northern Command also, McClain said. These JTFs, now part of U.S. Joint Forces Command, think of the unthinkable. Task force planners work out what military help would be needed in the event of an attack on the United States.

NORTHCOM will work with interagency groups on the federal, state and local level. The command will establish and maintain these links so all parties will be familiar with each other and the capabilities of the various agencies.

Northern Command will be a combatant command just as any other, McClain said. "(The commander of Northern Command) has all the authority that Title 10 (of the U.S. Code) gives to any combatant commander to execute the mission he's given," McClain said.

McClain said the NORTHCOM commander is the same as his counterparts at the U.S. Pacific or Central commands. "The difference is, the missions are different," he said. "But the chain of command is the same as with any other combatant commander. He

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will take his direction from the president, through the defense secretary with advice and direction from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

Northern Command will be in the same situation as the other combatant commands. It will receive military forces as required. According to the Unified Command Plan, Joint Forces Command, headquartered in Norfolk, Va., retains its role as the force provider to the combatant Cincs. "One of the things that will occur with the stand-up of Northern Command is that it will allow Joint Forces Command to focus on experimentation and transformation, which is their meat and potatoes mission," McClain said.

The JFCOM commander is currently also NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic. McClain said that the UCP change will divest the JFCOM commander of responsibilities for Supreme Allied Command, Atlantic. "It is up to NATO to determine a replacement for the current arrangement," he said.

Another change in the Unified Command Plan adds Russia and the Caucasus nations to the U.S. European Command's area of responsibility. In the past Russia was under the purview of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "It normalizes the relation that a combatant commander has with a country's military leadership as if it was any other country in his area of responsibility," McClain said.

"This does not eliminate the ability of Russia to go directly to the chairman or to the leadership of this country. What it does in the military structure is give Russia the ability to go to a local commander and work agreements that are beneficial to both sides."

Alaska falls under Northern Command for homeland security purposes, but forces based in the state look to Pacific Command. Also forces on the U.S. West Coast -- the Army's I Corps at Fort Lewis, Wash., the 3rd Fleet in San Diego and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Pendleton, Calif. -- will continue under PACOM.

"Just because the forces assigned to Pacific Command reside outside the area of responsibility doesn't have anything to do with their assignment or what they are doing," McClain said. This carries on the practice of forces in the United States being under the Central or Special Operations commands.

The Unified Command Plan also adjusts the borders for U.S. Southern Command. "The No. 1 requirement was to give U.S. Northern Command enough sea space and airspace around the continental United States so that the command could defend in depth," McClain said.

However, Cuba is 90 miles south of the Florida Keys, and this required a special arrangement. "Cuba will fall inside U.S. Northern Command's area of responsibility," McClain said. "But we didn't want to overburden the new command. For the time being, the responsibility for Cuba will remain with U.S. Southern Command."

Other changes will be studied, McClain said. Joint Staff personnel are looking at possibly merging U.S. Strategic and Space commands. Also, planners are studying merging U.S. Northern and Southern commands.

*(This story was originally published at*

*[http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2002/n05222002\\_200205226.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2002/n05222002_200205226.html))*